

Integrating the Monorail

Introduction draft

DRAFT

PLANNING
BACKGROUND
REPORT

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City of Seattle

Overview of Integrating the Monorail

Purpose and Scope

This planning background report is the first phase of Integrating the Monorail, the City of Seattle's station area planning program for the Seattle Monorail Green Line Project.

Integrating the Monorail examines the dynamic relationships between transportation, land use, economics and urban form within station areas. An urban design assessment and public input will inform the development of station area action plans, aimed at making the most of the opportunities presented by the Green Line and encouraging the best fit between the new infrastructure and its neighborhood setting. Integrating the Monorail will analyze these issues and opportunities within a quarter-mile area around stations from a land use perspective, and within a half-mile area around stations from a transportation perspective. On a case-by-case basis, analysis and recommendations may address a larger area where appropriate to integrate the monorail into the neighborhood context.

Purpose of Planning Background Report

The planning background report summarizes existing plans for and conditions in Green Line neighborhoods to provide a foundation for the identification of station area actions that are appropriate to each station area. The planning background report will also serve as a reference for the Seattle Monorail Project as it proceeds with Green Line project planning and design.

Next Steps: Urban Design Assessment

The next phase of Integrating the Monorail is an urban design assessment. This assessment will identify issues and opportunities related to the City's planning and design principles for the Green Line. A

range of options for public and private sector actions that can address these issues and opportunities will be developed and presented in the urban design assessment.

Review of the planning background for the Green Line corridor revealed some themes that are common to most station areas, and will provide a focus for the urban design assessment: access and placemaking. Neighborhoods along the Green Line corridor seek to improve access to, from and within their neighborhoods. Improved transit and preservation of existing general-purpose traffic capacity are generally desired. Neighborhoods in the Green Line corridor also seek to enhance and preserve the unique sense of place that characterizes each of the station areas.

Next Steps: Public Involvement

The City will welcome public input at each phase of the planning process, but will particularly encourage a response to the options identified through the urban design assessment. Public input will help to select those options that are recommended in station area action plans.

Next Steps: Station Area Action Plans

Public and private sector actions that are recommended to make the most of the monorail as a transportation system and create great urban places in the Green Line corridor will be presented in station area action plans.

Seattle Monorail Project— Green Line

On November 5, 2002, Seattle voters approved Citizen Petition No. 1, creating the Seattle Popular Monorail Authority (commonly known as the Seattle Monorail Project) and authorizing the funding and authority to develop a 14-mile “Green Line” monorail system that was identified as the first phase of a citywide monorail system in the Seattle Popular Monorail Plan. The Seattle Popular Monorail Plan was developed by the Elevated Transportation Company, a City public development authority created by voter initiative. The Seattle Popular Monorail Plan identifies the route, route options and

station location options for the Green Line. Up-to-date information on the Green Line project is most readily available on the Seattle Monorail Project website, www.elevated.org.

The origins of Citizen Petition No. 1 and the Green Line project include the development of the Seattle Center Monorail System for the 1962 Worlds Fair, various studies proposing extension of that system, and two citizen initiatives calling for a citywide system.

City of Seattle and Seattle Monorail Project Roles and Responsibilities

The Seattle Monorail Project is responsible for developing the Green Line transit system consistent with the direction of Citizen Petition No. 1 and with goals and policies adopted by the Board of the Seattle Monorail Project. Selection of the alignment, station locations, the design and procurement of the guideway, stations, and related improvements that may be developed as part of the Green Line system are SMP responsibilities.

agency for the Green Line project and the owner of much of the property and right-of-way along the proposed Green Line route. In the broadest sense, the City is the steward of its citizens resources and aspirations. Integrating the Monorail is focused on station areas rather than the design of project facilities, but can inform both SMP decisions and City regulatory and discretionary decisions related to the project.

The City of Seattle is both the local regulatory

Planning Context in Seattle & the Green Line Corridor

Comprehensive Plan

In the early 1990s, the City began development of a Comprehensive Plan to respond to the requirements of the Washington Growth Management Act. In 1994, the City adopted its Comprehensive Plan with the subtitle “Toward a Sustainable Seattle.” The plan presents a vision for a sustainable community that realizes core values of social equity, economic opportunity and environmental stewardship largely

through a land use, transportation and investment strategy that focuses jobs and housing growth in neighborhood centers that are linked by excellent transit service and provide amenities to serve the relatively dense populations of these centers. Fundamentally, the plan calls on the City, region and community to make land use and transportation choices that reduce our reliance on the automobile.

Neighborhood Plans

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes an “urban village strategy” that encourages continued growth and urbanization of existing Seattle neighborhoods. Neighborhood leaders expressed concerns that some aspects of the Plan, such as improved transit and amenities, may not be realized, leaving neighborhoods to accept the impacts of increased density without the investments intended to make that density sustainable. The City responded by launching an innovative neighborhood planning process that provided significant resources and authority to grassroots citizen groups to create detailed, neighborhood-based visions and plans within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan. Thirty-seven Seattle neighborhoods completed plans between 1998 and 2000, providing a clear articulation of local aspirations and priorities that was endorsed by the City and continues to provide a foundation for a variety of City regulatory and funding decisions.

Transportation Strategic Plan

Based on the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) is the City’s guide for managing Seattle’s transportation system. Adopted by City Council in October 1998, the TSP aims to protect the character and livability of Seattle’s neighborhoods, and to improve Seattle’s ability to move freight and goods. The TSP assists the City in long-range transportation planning and decision-making.

Sound Move Plan

The City’s Comprehensive Plan was developed in anticipation of future approval of a high-capacity transit system plan. Voters in the Central Puget Sound region approved the Sound Move plan for regional transit in 1996. Regional express bus and commuter rail service are currently operating, and

the first segment of a regional light rail system is expected to begin construction in 2003.

Seattle Transit Initiative for Intermediate Capacity Transit

Completed in December 2001, the Seattle Transit Study assessed the feasibility of developing Intermediate Capacity Transit (ICT) options in corridors throughout the City. The Study was led by a partnership of agencies responsible for transportation in Seattle including the City, the Elevated Transportation Company, King County, Sound Transit and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Study goals were to:

- Enhance the range of transportation choices within the City.
- Connect the neighborhoods and key destinations
- implement many Neighborhood Plans’ goals and recommendations.

The Study examined where and how ICT could best be used in order to significantly improve transit connections within the City and to regional transit systems, such as light rail, commuter rail and regional express buses. The first study phase, conducted in 2000, focused on identifying corridors that could form a future ICT system. The second study phase focused on two corridors: Northgate to Ballard to downtown Seattle and West Seattle to downtown.

King County Metro Six-Year Transit Plan

Local bus service in Seattle and service throughout King County is provided by King County’s Metro Transit Division. Bus service funding is allocated in the Six-Year Transit Plan; the most recent of these plans was adopted in November 2002 by the Metropolitan King County Council.

||||| Planning and Design Principles for Integrating the Monorail

The City believes that a common set of principles can guide both City station area planning and SMP project development decisions. The Comprehensive Plan and various adopted City policies provide the policy foundation for many of these planning and design objectives; others are proposed to respond to the opportunities presented by the planned Green Line system, or to potential and perceived conflicts between existing policies and the Green Line.

Make the most of the monorail as a transportation system

The Comprehensive Plan states that the transportation system may be the single most important determinant of this region's ability to achieve its other aims. In addition, each of the neighborhood plans promote improved transit to their communities. In order to provide the greatest mobility to the citizens of Seattle, and to increase access to jobs and economic opportunities, station area actions and project design should:

- Foster quality development in the station area that will attract riders to the system
- Create visible, convenient intermodal connections
- Ensure an efficient, safe system for users
- Reduce the need for automobile use, and encourage other modes of travel
- Consider the range of alternatives that can increase access to each station
- Minimize impacts to freight mobility and emergency services
- Capitalize on the opportunities for economic vitality and jobs at the station areas.

Create great urban places

The relationship of transportation and land use is fundamental to the Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy. Development is focused in concentrated rather than linear patterns, with residential growth targeted to the urban centers, hubs, villages

and neighborhood anchors. Growth in employment opportunities is directed toward urban centers, hubs and manufacturing/industrial centers.

The success of the station areas will depend on the quality and character of the development. Good design will be vibrant, human scale spaces, responding to the history, aesthetics, natural environment and sense of community identity. In order to create new assets for neighborhoods along the monorail route, station area actions and project design should:

- Encourage nodes of activity near the station, with land uses appropriate for the station area;
- Promote design of the highest quality of the monorail system and in the station areas;
- Enhance the public realm to enhance the station environment and shape the character of each station area;
- Reduce the impact of automobiles in station areas;
- Draw on history, identity, and culture of communities in designing for station areas; and
- Promote economic vitality and sustainability within station areas.

Maximize the quality of the pedestrian environment

The monorail will run above the City's public right-of-way, sometimes near the pedestrian realm in our most valuable urban environments. Good design of the monorail system is critical to the quality of Seattle's streetscape and character. The pedestrian realm will bring people to the station from neighborhoods and businesses. Station area actions and project design should:

- Minimize impacts of the new infrastructure on streetscape;
- Emphasize ground-level streetscape design and landscape;
- Ensure the quality of the pedestrian environment;

- Ensure the design of welcoming stations within safe environments.

Respect cultural and historic resources

The monorail will serve the heart of Seattle's downtown, the historic district in Pioneer Square, important destinations such as the Seattle Center, and the heart of several urban neighborhoods. The alignment and the design of the stations and the guideway will be critical to maintaining the value of Seattle's cultural and historic resources. Station area actions and project design should:

- Protect historically designated building facades and other resources to the greatest extent possible; and
- Minimize impacts on open spaces, views, and streetscape.

Balance the design of the monorail system as a whole with the various contexts and neighborhoods along the route

The neighborhood plans guard the distinct character within the city, and identify the need to foster the unique aspects of each neighborhood. Project design should recognize the scale and character of its context, as described in these plans. However, the monorail system will be a powerful new element of the cityscape, and will also need to maintain integrity

as a system throughout its length. In order to achieve this balance of overall system and context, station area actions and project design should:

- Ensure the highest design quality for this very visible new infrastructure in our city;
- Maintain the visual integrity of the monorail system as a piece of civic architecture along its length;
- Design the system, its stations and station areas to respond to the scale and the character of their context.

Maximize the potential of the monorail system to promote sustainability

By offering an energy-efficient transit alternative, the monorail will move our city towards a more sustainable future. The monorail will best contribute to sustainability by maximizing ridership and by focusing density near the stations. In addition, sustainable principles need to be incorporated in all aspects of design and operation. Station area actions and project design should:

- Maximize benefits to the quality of the environment through increased transit use;
- Reduce water consumption, energy consumption, and other environmental impacts through sustainable design; and
- Showcase emerging sustainable technologies.